

What is behind the German drive to war with Syria?

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Following the declaration of support by the German government for the US attack on Syria on Friday, Germany's media launched a campaign at the weekend for a massive expansion of aggression against the country.

The editorial of the current edition of *Der Spiegel* demands: "What is needed is more than just the half-hearted rearmament of the rebels or peace negotiations. Why not send a military warning to Assad, for example, by bombing the runways of his air force? Why not set up protective zones for civilians? Why not carry out cyber war against Damascus?" There are "other alternatives to military deployment, alternatives to an uncontrolled escalation." They are "partly risky, but not unthinkable."

In its Saturday edition, *Süddeutsche Zeitung's* editor Kurt Kister pleaded for the imposition of a no fly zone. The European Union could "make a serious attempt to make the recalcitrant partners Russia and the United States sit down together." Then he adds: "First steps—security zones, bans on flights, secured aid convoys—are possible. Germany could not play an independent role, but it could be a driving force in the EU."

The newspapers, which criticized Trump, did so from an even more right-wing perspective. *Die Welt* foreign correspondent Ansgar Graw demanded Trump bomb North Korea in addition to Syria. He writes: "A clear warning shot against Assad was long overdue. And reaction to Pyongyang's missile program does not have to be limited to a 'show of force', a pure demonstration of power. Thinking about preemptive military action against North Korea is not only legitimate, but imperative."

Graw criticized the US president for lacking a genuine war strategy and instead was tossing bombs as a response to his poor showing in opinion polls. "We would welcome a stronger US engagement in Syria, as well as North Korea, if we were sure that both cases would be integral parts of a clear strategy. But the fear remains that

the desperate Trump is just trying to polish up his image."

The journalists and scribblers baying for war with Syria and North Korea are well aware of the catastrophic consequences. Kister writes about the military attack in Syria, which he supports: "Nevertheless, this violent symbolic action harbours the danger of escalation between Russia and the US." This is such a great danger, "because many thousands of Russian soldiers are stationed in Syria."

Der Spiegel comments: "But if Trump really wants to set up a no-fly zone or a protective zone for civilians, this could not realistically be done from the air. It would probably require a significant number of ground troops and a massive military and logistical operation. In his election campaign, Trump clearly opposed such plans and warned of a 'Third World War.' And indeed, even in the case of a limited military strike, there is a danger of a confrontation between the US air force and Russian jets and air traffic control."

What is behind the hysterical campaign by the German media for a war, which could quickly escalate into the Third World War? The answer lies in the deep crisis of the capitalist system. Like the Trump government, the ruling class in Germany is reacting to the collapse of post WWII economic and political relations, the disintegration of the EU and growing social polarization with the drive to war and rearmament

As early as 2014, the Socialist Equality Party wrote in a resolution on the "return of German imperialism": "The revival of militarism is the response of the ruling class to the explosive social tensions, the deepening economic crisis and the growing conflicts between European powers. Its aim is the conquest of new spheres of influence, markets and raw materials upon which the export-dependent German economy relies; the prevention of a social explosion by deflecting social tensions onto an external enemy; and the militarization of society as a

whole, including the development of an all embracing national surveillance apparatus, the suppression of social and political opposition, and the bringing into line of the media.”

When German politicians and the media now line up behind the US attack on Syria and go so far as to demand even greater military aggression, they are not doing so as adherents of Trump’s war policy. Rather they seek to advance Germany’s own aims. In order to once again turn Germany into the leading military power in Europe—a power capable of asserting its economic and geostrategic interests using military measures, when necessary, against its rivals—the ruling elite is intensifying its offensive for war and militarism.

Under the title “The Cold War sends its regards” the weekly magazine of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* reports that the Defence Ministry is planning a massive upgrade of its military forces. In addition to last week’s announcement that a new unit would be established to fight cyber wars the government also plans to “establish three fully equipped field divisions, consisting mainly of tanks and mechanised infantry.” Their strength could vary “from 10,000 to 30,000 soldiers.” Artillery strength is to increase from the current three to 14 battalions. Military experts reckon that “the additional needs could only be met in the long term by the introduction of compulsory military service for men and women.”

Last weekend the business daily *Handelsblatt* devoted a section to “The new armaments race.” The paper reports that the Bundeswehr will receive 100 additional Leopard combat tanks. The new acquisition is “part of a gigantic upgrade, which will devour around 130 billion euro by 2030.” In addition to expanding the navy, new combat bombers, tankers, submarines and warships are to be acquired. In Berlin “There is talk about the acquisition of nuclear weapons, a so-called “D-bomb.”



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